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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000197

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/06/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ OPPOSITION JOURNALIST BRUTALLY ATTACKED

REF: 07 BISHKEK 1460

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Syrgak Abdyldayev, a journalist for a small Bishkek newspaper and a member of the opposition Ata Meken party, was attacked and seriously wounded by four unknown assailants on March 3. According to the paper's editor, Turat Akimov, the pattern of Abdyldayev's wounds -- 20 shallow stab wounds around the buttocks and groin, and compound fractures of both arms -- is characteristic of criminal gangs "sending a message." Akimov was visibly shaken by the attack. He said that his paper would probably close and that Abdyldayev would probably seek political asylum in a foreign country. Embassy issued a statement regarding the attack -- see paragraph 7. End Summary.

12. (C) Syrgak Abdyldayev, a journalist for the small Bishkek newspaper, "Reporter," and also a member of the opposition Ata Meken party, was attacked by four unknown assailants outside the newspaper's offices in downtown Bishkek around 7:30 p.m. on March 3. Abdyldayev is currently hospitalized, but in stable condition. According to the paper's editor, Turat Akimov, the pattern of Abdyldayev's wounds is characteristic of criminal gangs "sending a message." Abdyldayev suffered around 20 shallow stab wounds, exclusively around his groin and buttocks. The attackers also broke both of his upper arms so that the bones protruded from the flesh, and several of his fingers.

13. (SBU) In a press interview on March 6, Abdyldayev said that he was certain that the attack was the result of a "political order," but that he could not yet understand the particular motive behind it. The opposition party Ata Meken released a statement labeling the attack an "act of political intimidation," but did not offer any theories about who might have ordered or carried out the attack.

14. (C) Akimov told the Embassy that a female journalist working for the paper had been attacked about a year ago, and his newspaper had been experiencing unspecified "problems" since then. Abdyldayev had thought that people were

following him for a month prior to the attack, and the editor bitterly regretted that he had not taken Abdyldayev's concerns more seriously. The editor also said that shortly after the attack, he had received an anonymous phone call offering a meeting to pass on "secret information about Manas Air Base." He thought someone was trying to set him up for a second attack, so he refused the meeting.

15. (C) Akimov was visibly shaken by the attack, saying that he would probably have to close his newspaper, because he and his staff were afraid of writing anything else. He said he had visited Abdyldayev, and it would be at least a year before Abdyldayev could physically work again. But regardless, Abdyldayev would probably not resume his career as a Kyrgyz journalist, but would instead try to obtain political asylum somewhere.

16. (SBU) Kyrgyz authorities opened an investigation into the attack, and the Presidential Administration condemned the attack, calling for a speedy investigation. Interior Minister Kongatiyev announced that he would take personal charge of the investigation. He also took personal charge of the as-yet unsolved murder of journalist Alisher Saipov, who was killed in Osh in 2007 (reftel).

17. (U) Embassy issued the following statement: "The Embassy of the United States condemns the attack on Syrgak Abdyldayev, political reporter for the independent newspaper Reporter-Bishkek. We urge an immediate and thorough investigation into this terrible attack. Attacks against journalists are attacks against the very foundation of civil society. Attempts to silence journalistic investigations and reporting through violence or intimidation cannot be

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tolerated. The U.S. Embassy hopes for Mr. Abdyldayev's speedy and full recovery."

Comment

18. (C) Post as yet can find no clear reason why Abdyldayev would have been singled out for this brutal attack. In his reporting, Abdyldayev has extensively criticized the government, but he has also spread conspiracy theories about Manas Air Base, and he is far from the most painful or persistent thorn in the government's side. Opposition Member of Parliament Bakyt Beshimov put forward the theory to DCM on March 6 that Abdyldayev was attacked because he had written about Ruslan Shabatoyev, a Member of Parliament who disappeared in September 2008. Beshimov posited a connection between the attack, the disappearance, and Shabatoyev's earlier claims to him that he had material damaging to Bakiyev and his family.
GFOELLER